



GLENHAVEN PRIVATE PRESCHOOL

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Productivity Commission - Submission Paper

Dear Productivity Commission Team

Re – Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit this submission and express my views on the importance of high quality Early Childhood Learning and why **ALL** parents should be given the choice to choose the type of child care that is best suited for their child.

I have been an Early Childhood teacher for over 30yrs during which time I have operated and taught in a number of preschools in the Dural area, in the outskirts of Sydney. Presently I'm the owner Director of the Glenhaven Private Preschool at Kenthurst which caters for 63 children aged 3-5 years. This preschool has been operating since 2004 and this year we have 145 families enrolled.

As a private preschool, I wish to bring to the Commission's attention the unfair treatment and discrimination regarding the lack of financial support that parents choosing to attend my preschool receive by both State and Federal Governments. In particular,

1. Because my centre does not operate during school holidays my parents are not eligible for the Child Care Rebate
2. Because my preschool is a not a non-profit organisation there are no State subsidies to allow my parents a reduction in fees. (see Attach 1)

As a Early childhood teacher I know full well the importance of a high quality preschool program, a fact affirmed by Warren and Haisken-DeNew 2013 on page 12 of your Productivity Commission Issue Paper "attendance at preschool programs in Australia has been associated with higher year 3 NAPLAN scores in the domains of numeracy, reading and spelling" and Dr Andrew Dowling in *Preschool Education in Australian* who states that "preschools' unlike long day centres are known to offer a higher standard of care and are better suited to the wellbeing of the preschool child'. Which leads me to question, why the 'preschool model' is always excluded from Federal Government funding models?

For this reason I have always resisted converting my preschool into a long day care centre. I know I can deliver a much higher standard of care as a preschool than would be possible as a long day care centre. This might I add has come at a financial cost to me, (I could earn

substantially more as a long day care centre) and my parents who are deprived of financial support.

The coalition has promised to deliver more affordable and flexible childcare to help families juggle work and family commitments. Will this mean that,

- Families have the right to **choose** the type of care for their children.
- That parents been given the right to **choice** on whether their child attends Long Day Care for 48 weeks of the year or a Preschool that operates the same as the N.S.W. Public School system.
- That preschool care becomes a 'model option'

Presently parents choosing a 'preschool' such as mine, for their child, are being denied financial support, hence are being discriminated for choosing what is best for their child. Many parents are then forced into Long Day Care, not because they need the longer hours or they believe it to be the better option but simply because of the financial restraints. This has become more obvious over the past couple of years, as for the first time, I have experienced vacancies.

At Glenhaven Private Preschool, at least 60%-70% of mothers are part time workers. Many are joint small business owners with their husbands and perform the administrative role of the business; others are teachers or run a business from home. The fact that many are from outside the area, is testament that parents are willing to travel, to have their child attend a preschool of their choice.

My parents are forced to juggle work and family commitments just like those in Long Day Care however they **CHOOSE** to sent their children to a Preschool which closes during school holidays and has a high quality educational program and for exercising their **CHOICE**, they are penalised by both levels of Governments and denied the financial support offered to all other parents.

Amongst the local schools my preschool ranks as one of the top Early Childhood Learning Centres, with many of our recommendations coming from the local schools teachers, principals and community professionals, such as paediatricians. A fact that was also witnessed by Mr Philip Ruddock during his visit in February 2013 (see Attach 2)

Questions I would like answered by the Commission are

- Why, are my parents being discriminated against for merely **CHOOSING** to send their child to a 'Preschool' instead of a 'Long Day Care Centre'?
- Does the Commission believe it to be fair to force children into care for longer hours and extra weeks than they need simply by withholding financial benefits?
- If studies show that 'preschool' has more benefits and higher standards than long day care, why is it not an 'option'?
- Can the Commission justify spending taxpayer dollars on extra hours at long day care centres, when 6 hours per day is all that a parents needs.?

My parents **DO NOT** want their child in a centre with extended hours.

They **DO NOT** want their child in care when other siblings attending school have term vacations.

What they want is a **CHOICE**.

On page 11 of the Productivity Commission Issues Paper it states that -

“Under the Early Childhood Education National Partnership endorsed by COAG, all Australian governments have agreed that by the end of 2013, every child should have access to a **PRESCHOOL** program in the year prior to full time schooling – 15 hours a week, for 40 weeks a year and at a cost that does not restrict access to these services”

It's interesting to note that this is exactly what my parents are seeking but are deemed as being ineligible.

There is **NO REASON** why my parents should not be eligible to receive financial support as parents in Long Day Care.

- How can a government fairly justify denying financial support to parents on the basis of a centre's hours of operation?
- How can children receiving excellent Early Childhood Education be deemed as not eligible for support because the centre does not operate during school holidays? If attending a minimum of 48 weeks a year was in the interest of the child, why do schools not operate those weeks?

This is an issue that the Productivity Commission must urgently address so that the discrimination against the parents and children that attend preschools, such as mine STOPS.

Only then can ALL parents rightfully say they have a choice in the education and care of their children.

Yours Faithfully

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Director